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Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 24
November 12, 1962 -- 11:00 AM

In response to the President's question, General Taylor said that SAC is still on DEFCON 2. Other forces have been reduced to DEFCON 3. The President suggested that the level of alert might be reduced toward the end of the week, but he did not wish to make a decision now.

Secretary McNamara said any reduction in the state of readiness of U.S. forces would be a sign to the Soviet Union. The Russians would know immediately if our state of alert was reduced. He suggested that no reduction be made today. However, SAC should stand down as soon as possible because the present alert involves burning out large amounts of spare parts. The air defense units should also stand down, but this could not be done without giving a signal to the Russians. Secretary McNamara said he would recommend later this week when the reserve air defense units called up last month should be returned to civilian life.

Director McCone summarized current intelligence. He called attention to NIE 84-4-62 which summarizes Castro's capability for subversion in Latin America and lists military equipment which the Russians have given to Castro. The President commented that we should watch very carefully the use of Cuban arms to promote subversion in the hemisphere.

Secretary Rusk reported there had been no change over the week end on the political side. We had received no reply from the Russians on the withdrawal of the IL-28 bombers from Cuba. We had heard nothing about the Castro/Mikoyan negotiations in Havana.

Ambassador Stevenson reviewed the deadlocked negotiations with the Russians in New York. His talking paper is attached. It contains the specifics of a package to be presented to the Russians in an effort to end the New York negotiations and to seek a solution by negotiating with the Cubans directly or through the OAS. He commented that no proposals were being made in New York and the momentum of the negotiations there was slowing down. U Thant's proposal to name five Latin American Ambassadors as inspectors has encountered Cuban objections. An effort is being made to sell the idea of choosing any five Ambassadors agreeable to the parties concerned. The Soviets are refusing to give in on the withdrawal of the IL-28 bombers and are insisting on the five points which Castro put forward some time ago.

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Ambassador Stevenson said his proposal was aimed at ending the negotiations. He felt that the Russians would probably reject his package. Before presenting it to the Russians we would consult the major Latin American states to see if it was acceptable to them. If the Russians accepted, the transaction would be ended. If they came back with counterproposals, we might have to add to the package such things as an agreement to allow inspection of Cuban camps in the U. S. If it is rejected, we should avoid unilateral action as is proposed in the State Department papers. We should make every effort to go with the Latin American states and keep them unified with us.

Secretary Rusk said he agreed we should continue to follow a policy of seeking multilateral actions. He urged that we stay on our original course until we get a reply from Khrushchev. He preferred this course to Stevenson's suggestion of putting forward a new proposal now.

The President asked whether we should give a guarantee against invading Cuba if the Russians refused to withdraw the IL-28 bombers. Ambassador Stevenson replied that we should not. If the Soviets refused to withdraw the bombers, we should make a full statement in the UN Security Council.

Mr. McCloy, who has been taking an active part in the negotiations, recommended that we make the following offer to Kuznetsov. If the Russians would agree to take out the IL-28 bombers by fixed future date, we would lift our quarantine at once. He asked whether we should give a guarantee covering only invasion. He said he believed Khrushchev was under real pressure and urged that we deal with the Cuban problem from a world point of view and with regard to U. S. /USSR relations rather than as a U. S. /Cuba problem. He believed we should make the Russians an offer covering Cuba. Khrushchev then might be easier to deal with on Berlin. He suggested that we talk about normalization in the Caribbean and offer to talk to the Russians about other problems. Khrushchev needs a face-saving device. He can't back down again. We should make an informal approach to him now before he comes down very hard in opposition to further measures necessary to resolve the Cuban crisis.

The President commented that the quarantine was losing credibility. He added that in all papers discussing a ~~co~~-invasion pledge the word "assurances" be used rather than the word "guarantee."

Ambassador Stevenson again urged that we put our final position to the Russians before they put their final position to us.

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Secretary Dillon asked how the U.S. could give an assurance not to invade Cuba without some safeguard covering the reintroduction of strategic missiles to Cuba. Ambassador Stevenson replied that we could rely on aerial reconnaissance plus promises from the Cubans and the Russians.

Secretary Rusk asked whether we should lift the quarantine if the Russians promised to withdraw the IL-28 bombers. He felt we should maintain our insistence on aerial surveillance and on on-site inspection but lift the quarantine if the Russians promise to take out the IL-28s

Mr. McCloy suggested that we tell the Russians we would give a guarantee if they took certain actions.

The President said he did not want any assurances we might give to be included in any document more formal than a letter.

In response to the President's comment that the ideal arrangement would be a monthly on-site inspection, Ambassador Stevenson said we can't get on-site inspection. Our only hope is to reach some mutual understanding about inspection, such as counting the missiles as they go out on Soviet ships. He doubted we could get approval for a Latin American atom-free zone.

Secretary Rusk said we must have some way in which to answer the waves of reports that offensive missiles are still being put into Cuba by the Russians. Mr. McCloy suggested that we could hold the Russians to the commitment made in the October 26th Khrushchev letter, i.e., that the Russians would not bring in any weapons.

The Attorney General raised again the question of how we could prove that the Russians are not delivering new arms to Cuba.

Referring to the TV Today show, the President asked that within twenty-four hours our officials interrogate every Cuban refugee who was making statements about arms going to Cuba. The refugees are naturally trying to build up their story in an effort to get us to invade. We must get to the people the fact that the refugees have no evidence which we do not have. Such refugee statements, if they continue, could make the problem almost unmanageable. He suggested again that we arrange to check every press, radio and TV report made by a refugee and promptly report back to the media involved if there was no evidence behind the refugee allegations.

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General Taylor raised the question of how we ensure the continuation of necessary aerial reconnaissance in the long range. Mr. McCone pointed out that if the SAM sites are operational, we cannot ensure the continuance of aerial reconnaissance with U-2s.

The President said we should conduct the aerial reconnaissance we consider necessary. We must continue to do this because a UN system has not been created. He asked whether we should tell the Cubans we are continuing reconnaissance or just go ahead and do it. Ambassador Stevenson replied that we cannot tell the Cubans because they would oppose our reconnaissance. The President said our reconnaissance can be based on the OAS resolution if no other position is acceptable to the Russians. The question is whether we surface our current aerial surveillance.

Secretary Rusk commented that no secrecy is possible in this hemisphere. Our air reconnaissance does not come under the OAS resolution.

Under Secretary Ball cautioned against building up Castro as being able to defy both the U. S. and the USSR. He felt such an impression would have a bad effect in Latin America.

Ambassador Stevenson said ex post facto verification of the removal of the Soviet missiles is one problem. Such verification we cannot get. Continuing verification that missiles are not being reintroduced is another problem.

The Attorney General pointed out that these two problems were not separable. He wanted to know what we tell the American people we are doing to prevent the reintroduction into Cuba of Soviet strategic missiles. Khrushchev lied once and he could lie again. We must have an acceptable guarantee that there will be no reintroduction of missiles. We can't live without taking some action which ensures us that we know whether or not he is complying with a statement on non-reintroduction of missiles.

The President suggested that we say we are taking every means to ensure that there is no reintroduction of missiles. These actions were taken under the OAS resolution. We would not need to say we were overflying Cuba.

Ambassador Stevenson agreed that we should just overfly Cuba and not say we were doing so. We should get the OAS to say that this hemisphere cannot live with a Cuba which is promoting subversion and action will be taken, if necessary, to prevent Cuban subversion.

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The President commented that an assurance covering invasion does not ban ~~an economic blockade~~ an economic blockade or tie our hands completely. We can't give the impression that Castro is home free.

Secretary Rusk said we cannot unilaterally amend the Rio Treaty. Any assurance which we would give does not affect the provision in the Rio Treaty which allows invasion under certain circumstances.

Ambassador Stevenson said we had to decide whether to give the Soviets a package proposal before hearing from Khrushchev or hold off until we had the Russian reply. If we decide on making a package proposal we must decide whether it is a full package or a partial package.

The President read the proposed wording of an assurance we would give against invasion. He suggested that any assurance which is made should appear as a restatement of undertakings in the UN Charter and the Rio Treaty rather than as a new commitment.

Secretary Rusk suggested that no formal statement be given to the press today.

The President asked that a short statement be prepared for him to look at at a 4:00 meeting which would say we are waiting for a Russian reply to our demand that they remove the IL-28 bombers.

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